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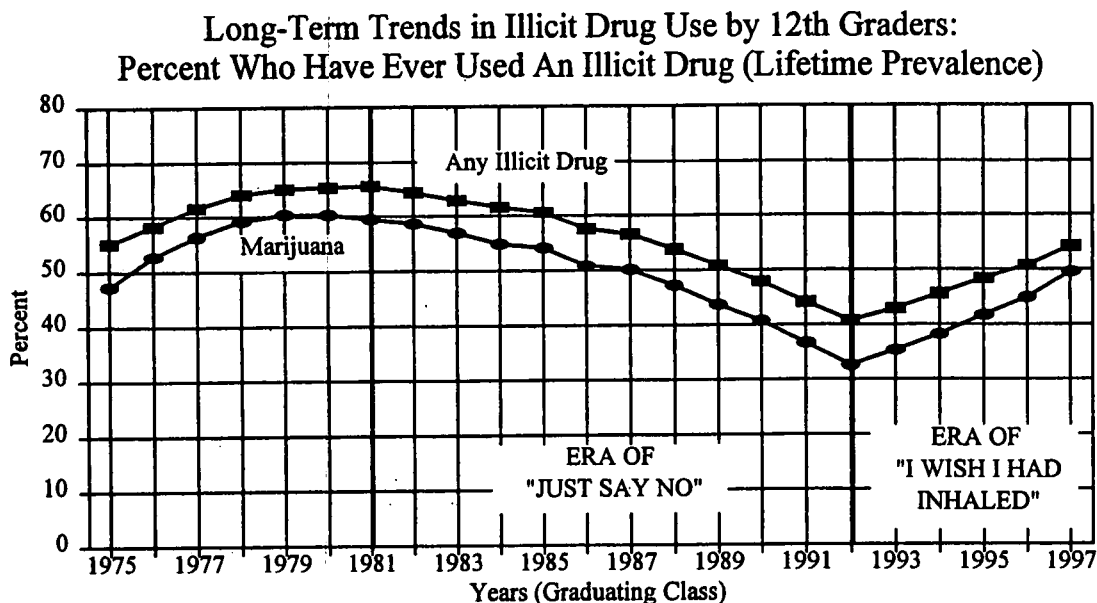
The Two Modern Eras of Drug Abuse

"Just Say No" Versus "I Wish I Had Inhaled"

Last Saturday President Clinton called for a renewed national effort against drugs. The Republican response came from Speaker Gingrich who told the American people the tragic facts:

"From 1979 to 1992 — through strong presidential leadership and Nancy Reagan's 'Just Say No' campaign — we were able to reduce drug use among teenagers by nearly two thirds. . . . Unfortunately, since the election of Bill Clinton and Al Gore in 1992, that strong leadership has disappeared. . . . The impact has been tragic and predictable. Since 1992, drug use among teens has skyrocketed. . . ."

The graph below shows the trends and divides them into two eras. The remarkable progress that was made during the Reagan Era of "Just Say No" has been supplanted by rapid reversals in the Clinton Era of "I Wish I Had Inhaled." Cultural historians will remember that it was in June 1992 that Bill Clinton went on MTV and said that he wished that he had inhaled when he tried marijuana for the first time.



RPC chart based on data from University of Michigan's "Monitoring the Future" study, December 1997

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